

## GUARDIAN ANGELS

Eric Lyons, M.Min.

**T**hough Scripture never uses the term “guardian angel,” millions of Bible believers through the centuries have professed their conviction in such a classification of angels. In the third century A.D., Origen wrote that “each one of us, even to the ‘least’ who are in the church of God” has “a good angel, an angel of the LORD, who guides, warns and governs” (p. 128). More than a century later, Jerome declared that “the worth of souls is so great that from birth each one has an angel assigned to him for his protection” (p. 209). Around that same time, Chrysostom, in his Homily on Colossians 1:15-18, remarked: “For each believer hath an Angel; since even from the beginning, every one of those that were approved had his Angel.... [T]here is a demon present also” (p. 273). In the centuries to follow, the Catholic Church popularized the concept of guardian angels even more. In 1615, for example, Pope Paul V officially added “Feast of the Guardian Angels” to the Roman calendar (“Feast...,” 2010). Later, “Guardian Angels” Catholic churches began to arise across America, from Rochester, New York to Chaska, Minnesota.

There is no doubt that millions of people around the world have been captivated by the thought of guardian angels. Though many people who iden-

tify themselves as Christians believe in the existence of this special class of angels, the only thing that ultimately matters about this subject or any other is, “What does God’s Word have to say on the matter?”

### DEFINITION OF TERMS

#### Angel

**T**he English word “angel” is translated from the Greek *angelos* and the Hebrew *malawk*, and literally means “messenger” (“Angel,” 1988). Sometimes in Scripture “angel” is used in reference to human messengers. For example, on one occasion the Old Testament prophet Haggai was called “the Lord’s *malawk*” (i.e., “messenger,” 1:13). On another occasion, when God spoke through the prophet Malachi, He prophesied of the coming of John the Baptizer, the forerunner of Christ, saying, “Behold, I send My messenger (Hebrew *malawk*), and he will prepare the way before Me” (3:1). Hundreds of years later, when the apostle Matthew recorded Jesus’ quotation of this scripture, he used the Greek term *angelos* (11:10). John the Baptizer was the *angelos* of God (i.e., not a heavenly being, but God’s human messenger).

Most of the time, however, the terms *malawk* and *angelos* refer to created (Psalm 148:2,5; Colossians 1:16), cele-

tial beings who perform a variety of duties for the Creator of heaven and Earth. They are strong (Matthew 28:2), swift (Daniel 9:20-23), breathtaking (Daniel 8), ministering (Hebrews 1:14) messengers (Luke 1:26), who are concerned about the salvation of man (Luke 15:10). God’s faithful angels have done everything from ministering to the Son of God following His 40-day fast (Matthew 4:11) to contending with the devil (Jude 9), and they will play a major role at the end of time when Jesus returns

## CONTENTS

### ARTICLES

- Guardian Angels*  
Eric Lyons . . . . . 81

### DEPARTMENTS

- Speaking Schedules . . . . . 85
- Note from the Editor  
*Gifts for the Spirit* . . . . . 88

### RESOURCES

- America’s Most Pressing Concern* . . . 45-R, 48-R

to judge the world (Matthew 13:41; 25:31-32; 2 Thessalonians 1:7).

## Guardian Angel

Since the term “guardian” has as its most basic meaning “one that guards” (see “Guardian,” 2010), there is a sense in which the Bible speaks very clearly on the subject: God has used angelic beings to “guard” a variety of people and places in the past. As early as Genesis chapter three, after the fall of man, God “placed cherubim [“winged angelic beings”—see “Cherubim,” 1986] at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to **guard** the way to the tree of life” (3:24, emp. added). Approximately 2,000 years later, two angels struck blind a group of Sodomites and **guarded** Lot and his household from harm (Genesis 19:9-11). When Nebuchadnezzar cast Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego into the fiery furnace, “God sent His angel and delivered His servants” (Daniel 3:28), thus **guarding** the three Hebrews from the furnace’s consuming flames. During the reign of Darius the Mede, God sent His angel to **guard** Daniel in a den of lions (Daniel 6:21-22). Centuries later, after the establishment of the church,



In Raphael's 16<sup>th</sup>-century painting, “The Liberation of St. Peter,” he illustrated how an angel miraculously freed Peter from prison (Acts 12:5-10).

God sent an angel to release Peter from prison, **guarding** and guiding him safely out of the prison (Acts 12:1-10). Without a doubt, Almighty God has used His marvelous angelic creation in the past to serve as a kind of guardian for His people.

Consider, however, the way in which the term “guardian angel” is most often used in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. *Merriam-Webster* defines “guardian angel” as

“an angel believed to have special care of **a particular individual**” (2010, emp. added). According to *Encyclopedia.com*, a “guardian angel” is “a spirit that is believed to watch over and protect a **person** or place” (2010, emp. added). Popularly speaking, if a person googles the phrase “My guardian angel saved/helped,” he will discover thousands of articles or posts where people avow that their personal guardian angels have saved them from certain death, or helped them escape some serious calamity.

Although religionists have defined guardian angels in a variety of ways in the past (cf. Origen, Jerome, Chrysostom), since Catholics claim these angels “are a development of Catholic doctrine and piety based on Scripture” (see “Feast...,” 2010), it is appropriate to consider how they define these angels. According to AmericanCatholic.org, a guardian angel is “**an angel** assigned to guide and nurture **each human being**” (“Feast...,” emp. added). In the 47<sup>th</sup> volume of the *Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, Pie-Raymond Regamey summarized Catholicism’s teachings

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on the matter, particularly regarding who has a guardian angel:

Whatever school of philosophy we may follow, an understanding of the work of the guardian angel...in its place in the whole order of creation, implies that every man has the benefit of his aid, not only the faithful, and has it from the first moment of independent life, from birth.... The worst sinners have this faithful and kindly friend (1960, 47:92-93).

### GUARDING THE WICKED?

**A**lthough God certainly “makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matthew 5:45), no passage of Scripture teaches that every person who has ever lived, whether good or evil, had/has a guardian angel assigned to him from birth. No Bible verse suggests that every man, even “the worst sinners” (Regamey, p. 93), “has an angel assigned to him for his protection” (Jerome, p. 209) and “the benefit of his aid” (Regamey, p. 92). Are we to think that Pharaoh and Herod had guardian angels when they butchered myriads of innocent children (Exodus 1:15-22; Matthew 2:16-18)? [The Bible says nothing about giving any wicked Pharaoh a guardian angel, but God did harden Pharaoh’s heart (Exodus 9:12,34; 10:1,20,27; 11:10; 14:8; cf. Butt and Miller) and send “angels of destruction” against him and his fellow Egyptians (Psalm 78:49, emp. added). Likewise, Scripture is silent regarding Herod’s protective angel. However, “an angel of the LORD” did warn **Joseph** in a dream, saying, “Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him” (Matthew 2:13).] And what about the wicked Jezebel, who “massacred the prophets of the LORD” (1 Kings 18:4), or the multi-million-man-murderer Hitler? Are we to think that God provided each of them with a special angel to “benefit” and “aid” him/her? The very thought is absurd, not to mention foreign to Scripture.

Are we to believe that God allows the wicked to have guardian angels,

but He does not hear (to respond to) their prayers? Throughout the Old and New Testaments, Bible writers repeatedly stressed that rebellious, sinful individuals should not expect to have God answer their prayers in a positive way. “The effective, fervent prayer of a **righteous** man avails much” (James 5:16, emp. added), because “the eyes of the LORD are on the **righteous**, and his ears are open to **their** prayers; but the face of the LORD is against those who do evil” (1 Peter 3:12, emp. added; cf. Psalm 34:16; Proverbs 15:29). The psalmist testified: “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear” (66:18). The prophet Isaiah wrote: “Behold, the LORD’S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that **He will not hear**” (Isaiah 59:1-2, emp. added). In light of the fact that God will not even hear (to respond to) the rebellious, how could one ever conclude that “the worst sinners” have a “faithful” guardian angel (Regamey, p. 93)?

### MIRACLES AND GUARDIAN ANGELS

**T**he Bible clearly teaches that God has worked all manner of miracles in the past, and has the **potential** to work them at any moment (e.g., at any second Jesus could miraculously “descend from heaven with a shout with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise”—1 Thessalonians 4:16). Wondrous miracles wrought by God and His messengers spatter the biblical text. God miraculously created the Universe and everything in it (Genesis 1). He sent ten plagues upon the Egyptians (Exodus 7-12), parted the Red Sea (Exodus 14), and caused water to come from a rock twice during Israel’s 40 years of wandering in the wilderness (Exodus 17; Numbers 20). In the days of Elijah and Elisha, as well as in the first century, God occasionally raised the dead (1 Kings

17:17-24; 2 Kings 4:8-37; Acts 20:7-12). During the time of Christ, God worked all manner of miracles, displaying His infinite power—over nature, disease, demon, and death. God also used angels occasionally in the past to work a variety of wonders: from striking Lot’s attackers with blindness to setting Peter free from prison (Genesis 19:9-11; Acts 12:7,10). Thus, every Bible-believing Christian must acknowledge that God has worked an array of miracles in the past, and has the power and potential to work them at any time. However, simply because God has the ability to work miracles at any moment, and simply because He has used angels to work a variety of miracles in the past, does not mean that He has chosen to work miraculously in this present age.

The fact of the matter is, the kinds of verifiable miracles recorded in Scripture are not occurring in this day and age. Neither man nor angel has been miraculously restoring shriveled hands in the midst of their enemies (Luke 6:6-10) or supernaturally reattaching severed ears (Luke 22:51). God has chosen to use neither preacher nor “guardian angel” to miraculously cure congenital blindness (John 9:1-7). What’s more, no one today is being raised from the dead (John 11:43). Once again, **this is not a “God-power” issue; it is a “God-purpose” issue.** God has chosen to cease working miracles (i.e., He has chosen to stop working outside His laws of nature) during this time period because the purpose of miracles has been fulfilled.

Unlike magicians, who perform amusing tricks for entertainment purposes, Scripture teaches that miracles happened in Bible times for a very specific purpose: **to confirm the Word.** Before the New Testament was written, when the apostles and prophets were preaching the Gospel, Mark 16:20 indicates that God worked with them by “confirming the word through the accompanying of signs.” The message that the first-century apostles and prophets preached could

be shown to be true by the various miracles that God worked through them (Hebrews 2:3-4). When a God-inspired speaker stepped forward to declare God's Word, God confirmed His Word by having the speaker perform a miracle to show that he was from God (cf. Exodus 5-12; Acts 8:5-12). The miracle showed the hearers that God was behind the speaker's remarks. Miracles **authenticated** the spoken word as being God's Word (cf. John 3:2). Like the essential scaffolding on the sides of incomplete apartment buildings, miracles were once necessary to "complete" (confirm) the revelations of God. However, as with the scaffolding that is needless (and, in fact, is very out of place) on a finished apartment building, once God's Word was completely revealed and confirmed (cf. 2 Peter 1:3), miracles became unnecessary. [For a thorough study of God's cessation of miracles in modern times, see Dave Miller's 2003 article titled, "Modern-Day Miracles, Tongue-Speaking, and Holy Spirit Baptism: A Refutation."]

Although many guardian-angel advocates insist that their alleged angels have performed various miraculous feats, neither earthly reality nor the heavenly Scriptures confirm their stories. The kinds of verifiable miracles Jesus, the apostles, and the prophets, and even various angels have worked (e.g., Genesis 19:11; Daniel 3:19-29), are not being duplicated today. Furthermore, the Scriptures insist that those things that were incomplete and partial (miraculous gifts) would be replaced by the total and complete (i.e., the fully revealed Word of God; 1 Corinthians 13:8-10; James 1:25; see Miller, 2003).

### ANGELS AND THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

**T**o say that God has not chosen to work miraculously today is not equivalent to denying God's activity on Earth. From Genesis through Revelation, the Bible clearly teaches God works providentially (through natural means) in the lives of His

people. The LORD was with Joseph during his enslavement in Potiphar's house (Genesis 39:2,3), his imprisonment (39:20,23), and his role as a powerful ruler in Egypt (45:5-9). Though it was Joseph's brothers who had sold him into slavery and Pharaoh who had appointed him second in command of all of Egypt, Joseph understood that, ultimately, God was behind it all. By working providentially (within natural laws) in the life of Joseph, "**God...made**" him "lord of all Egypt" (Genesis 45:9, emp. added).

God's providential care for His people did not stop with Joseph, Esther, or Elijah (1 Kings 18:41-46). God continues to care for (1 Peter 5:7), help (Hebrews 13:5-6; 1 Corinthians 10:13), and discipline His children (Hebrews 12:3-11). God answers the prayers of the humble-hearted, working providentially in the lives of His people (Matthew 6:25-33). As Paul proclaimed: "We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28). Simply because God is not working **miraculously** through man or angel to give sight to the blind, raise the dead, etc., does not mean that God is inactive in the affairs of mankind (see Jackson, n.d.).

God is not passively sitting on the sidelines while the wicked "god of this age" (i.e., Satan; 2 Corinthians 4:4) and his **rebellious angels** work "in the sons of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2; Matthew 25:41; Revelation 12:7,9). If "the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8), attempting to trick and deceive mankind (Ephesians 6:11; 1 Timothy 3:7), rest assured that God's good angelic creation also plays an important role on Earth, even during this non-miraculous age. The New Testament does not specifically detail how God uses angels in His providential care of the world and His people, but one thing is certain: He does use them.

Not only are angels merely interested in the salvation of men (Luke 15:10) and involved in the spiritual realm transporting the souls of the dead into paradise (Luke 16:22), they also work in God's overall providential care of His people as "ministering spirits." In the context of exalting Christ above God's angelic heavenly hosts, the writer of Hebrews rhetorically asked: "But to which of the **angels** has He ever said: 'Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool'? Are **they** not all **ministering spirits sent forth to minister** for those who will inherit salvation?" (1:13-14, emp. added). Although far inferior to Christ, angels are special celestial beings whom God uses to "minister" (Greek *diakonian*) or "serve" (RSV, NIV) His people. What's more, considering the present tense form of the participle "being sent forth," God's people have every reason to believe that God is **continually** sending out His angels "as human needs correspond to His divine will" (Jackson, 2000; Dods, 2002, 4:258). Even though no particulars are given in this passage, we can rightly conclude that God uses angels to positively affect the lives of His people. Angels are actively working as God's ministering spirits. Still, there is no evidence in Scripture that each child of God, much less every heathen, has his or her own guardian angel, and especially not one who is performing miraculous feats on his or her behalf.

### GUARDIAN ANGEL "PROOF TEXTS"

#### Psalm 34:7

**I**n the midst of a beautiful passage of Scripture in which the psalmist repeatedly acknowledges and extols the LORD for His wondrous care, guidance, and protection, he testifies that "[t]he angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them" (34:7). Was the psalmist here referring to man's guardian angel? Was he teaching the



## America's Most Pressing Concern

Dave Miller, Ph.D.

Many concerns occupy the minds of those who are disturbed by what is happening to the United States: bloated deficits, oppressive taxation, alleged global warming, rampant crime, and the influx of intruders who do not share the values and worldview of Americans. What are the central issues and topics that the average American pinpoints as of greatest concern? What issues stir widespread social and political fervor? For example, in the recent election, what concerns were most important to Americans as they cast their votes? By far, the top issue among all party groups was **the economy**. Healthcare was #2, followed by the size and power of federal government ("Economy Top Issue...", 2010). But make no mistake: "The economy in general and the specific economic problem of unemployment or lack of jobs far outpace all other issues when Americans are asked to name **the most important problem facing the country**" ("Economy, Jobs...", 2010, emp. added).

Beyond the economy, contemplate for a moment a few of the other issues that occupy the concern of many Americans:

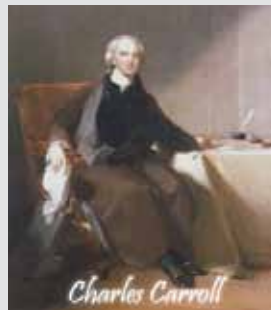
War in Iraq/ Afghanistan	Illegal immigration	Federal deficit
Education	Environmental issues	Energy availability
Terrorism	Foreign affairs	Social security and Medicare

Many other issues might be listed, but these are sufficient to make the point: Most Americans are more concerned about physical and financial matters than **spiritual** matters. When one contemplates the multitude of pressing concerns, it is easy to feel "scattered" and overwhelmed as to (1) what the **real** problem is and (2) the antidote.

While these matters certainly merit the attention and due concern of citizens, the fact of the matter is that the Founders of our Republic pinpointed a much more critical, logically prior issue. Consider the forthright remarks of three:

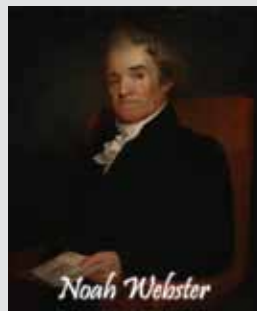
In a letter written to fellow Founder and signer of the federal *Constitution*, James McHenry, on November 4, 1800, *Declaration* signer Charles Carroll of Carrollton declared:

[W]hat motive can be stronger than the belief, founded on revelation, that



a virtuous life will be rewarded by a happy immortality? **Without morals a republic cannot subsist any length of time**; they therefore who are decrying the Christian religion, whose morality is so sublime and pure...are undermining the solid foundation of morals, **the best security for the duration of free governments** (as quoted in Steiner, 1907, p. 475, emp. added).

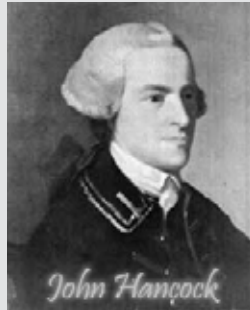
Consider carefully the admonitions of Founder Noah Webster regarding the indispensable nature of Christianity to the existence of our Republic:



[O]ur citizens should early understand that the genuine source of correct republican principles is the Bible, particularly the New Testament or the Christian religion.... [T]he religion which has introduced civil liberty, is the religion of Christ and his apostles, which enjoins humility, piety, and benevolence; which acknowledged in every person a brother, or a sister, and a citizen with equal rights. This is genuine Christianity, and **to this we owe our free constitutions of government**.... [T]he Christian religion ought to be received, and maintained with firm and cordial support. **It is the real source of all genuine republican principles**.... The religion of Christ and

# RESOURCES

his apostles, in its primitive simplicity and purity, unencumbered with the trappings of power and the pomp of ceremonies, is **the surest basis of a republican government....** [T]hose who destroy the influence and authority of the Christian religion, sap the foundations of public order, of liberty, and of republican government.... (1832, pp. v,247,310-311, emp. added). The United States commenced their existence under circumstances wholly novel and unexampled in the history of nations. They commenced with civilization, with learning, with science, with constitutions of free government, and with **that best gift of God to man, the Christian religion** (as quoted in Scudder, 1881, p. 242, emp. added).



In his 1780 inaugural address as the governor of his home state of Massachusetts, *Declaration* signer John Hancock reminded his fellow citizens of the importance of Christianity to the perpetuation of the nation:

Sensible of **the importance of Christian piety and virtue to the order and happiness of a state**, I cannot but earnestly commend to you every measure for their support and encouragement.... A due observation of the Lord's Day is not only important to internal religion, but **greatly conducive to the order and benefit of civil society....** Manners, by which not only the freedom, but **the very existence of the republics, are greatly affected**, depend much upon the public institutions of religion and the good education of youth (as quoted in Brown, 1898, p. 269, emp. added).

There you have it. The Founders repeatedly articulated **the #1 concern**—the paramount, ultimate, most pressing issue facing the nation. Without this singular, critically important quality—if America does not get this one matter correct—the economy will

be the least of our worries. Stated succinctly, that all-consuming, quintessential, premiere concern is: We the citizens, and our leaders, must reinstate **acknowledgement of God and His religion (i.e., Christianity), and turn to Him in humble, penitent obedience.** According to the Founders themselves, the God of the Bible was **solely** responsible for the establishment and perpetuation of the Republic. And that national recognition is the **only** thing that will preserve and sustain us, as it has done for over two centuries. Even if we could snap our fingers and fix all our economic woes instantaneously, without God's favor we remain in deadly danger. Indeed, rather than fearing terrorists or economic depression, the time has come to reinstate **a healthy, sober fear of God** (Proverbs 1:7,29-33; Ecclesiastes 12:13; Hebrews 10:31; 12:29—see Miller, 2003; Miller, 2009).

Unless America can get this one, critical issue sorted out; unless a sizable percentage of Americans will go back to God, Christ, and the Bible, and recognize their foremost need of receiving divine favor; unless citizens can restore moral and sexual sanity to their behavior based on Christian principles, the country is destined to destruction. "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people" (Proverbs 14:34). May God bless America.

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doctrine of guardian angels as modern religionists often define the term?

First of all, as is frequently the case in the Old Testament, the expression “the angel of the LORD” in this passage likely refers to the preincarnate Christ (cf. Genesis 16:11-13; Judges 13:3-23; Exodus 23:20-21; 1 Corinthians 10:1-4; see Myers, 1978, pp. 59-79; see also Quertermous, 2002, pp. 200-220). It is God, not created angelic beings (Psalm 34:7), Whom the Bible states time and again that man is to “fear” and worship (Psalm 33:18; 67:7; 85:9; Ecclesiastes 12:13). Thus, if it is the case that the eternal Word (John 1:1-5) is meant in this passage, then Psalm 34:7 obviously is not referring to one or more “guardian angels” (as the term is popularly defined in the 21<sup>st</sup> century). Today, Jesus certainly dwells with His church (Matthew 18:20; 28:20) and strengthens those who fear Him (Philippians 4:13), but He is not what most people are referring to when they speak of their “guardian angel.”

Second, even if “the angel of the LORD” in this passage does not refer to the preincarnate Christ (which is difficult to imagine given that man is to “fear Him”), “guardian angel” advocates still cannot find proof of their doctrine here. This verse does not teach that **each** person on the planet has **an angel** assigned to him to deliver him from harm. Rather, one angel (“the angel of the LORD”) looks after a **plurality** of God’s faithful

children (as is evident by the use of the plural pronouns “those” and “them”).

### Psalm 91:9-13

In Psalm 91, the inspired poet says of the one who puts his trust in God,

Because you have made the LORD, who is my refuge, even the Most High, your dwelling place, no evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling; for He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone. You shall tread upon the lion and the cobra, the young lion and the serpent you shall trample underfoot (9-13).

This passage, which Satan once misapplied when tempting Jesus (Matthew 4:6; Luke 4:10-11), certainly is encouraging to the faithful child of God. It describes in general terms God’s protection of His people under the Old Law; but it does not say that **each** child of God (and certainly not every person who has ever lived) has his own “guardian angel.” The psalmist noted that God would give a **plurality** of angels the responsibility of keeping one that trusts in him. During the age of miracles, this certainly could have included God using His angels to work various supernatural feats (e.g., striking the enemies of righteousness with blindness in Genesis 19:11). Though the age of genuine biblical miracles has ended (see Miller, 2003),

this scripture can still be comforting to the Christian in the same manner in which Hebrews 1:14 is: God sends forth His angels to minister to the saints, providentially taking care of His people.

One other important detail to remember when reading the psalms (including especially Psalm 91) is the inspired penmen’s use of figures of speech, particularly hyperbolism. As in Psalm 58:3, where the psalmist intentionally exaggerated the wickedness of mankind by referring to them as going “astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies,” in Psalm 91, the writer hyperbolically stresses God’s protection of His people. Not that God is incapable of keeping his people from harm, but as Travis Quertermous noted, to press the psalmist’s reference to treading upon snakes and lions literally “would be an obvious absurdity, not to mention forcing a contradiction with other Bible passages wherein God’s faithful saints suffered great persecution. It must be remembered that the Psalms are poetry and thus abound with figurative language. It is a terrible exegetical blunder to unduly literalize it” (2002, p. 261).

### Acts 12:15

After God sent an angel miraculously to release and guide him from prison, Peter traveled to the house of Mary, John Mark’s mother, where “many were gathered together praying” (Acts 12:11). When he arrived at the door of the gate and knocked, a girl named Rhoda “recognized Peter’s voice,” and “because of her gladness she did not open the gate, but ran in and announced that Peter stood before the gate” (12:14). What was the group’s response? They said to Rhoda, “You are beside yourself!” When she insisted, they said, “**It is his angel**” (12:15, emp. added).

Does this passage prove, as some believe, that “humans have guardian angels” (“Angels...,” n.d.)? As “[i]nteresting as this passage is,” Peter Davids rightly concluded, “it simply witnesses

## SPEAKING SCHEDULES

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### Eric Lyons

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to the beliefs of the Christians in that house. The author of Acts **reports** rather than **endorses** their views” (Kaiser, et al., 1996, p. 527, emp. added). As Lenski remarked, Luke, the inspired writer of Acts, “does not state a Scriptural doctrine but only the superstitious ideas of those who were alarmed by Rhoda’s report” (Lenski, 1943, p. 692). Even the scholarly J.W. McGarvey, who endorsed to some extent the idea of “guardian angels” (1875, p. 157), admitted in his commentary on Acts that those meeting at Mary’s house “undoubtedly had allusion to the popular superstition of their day, that a man’s guardian angel sometimes assumed his form” (1872, p. 139). [NOTE: It is also possible, as the studious Guy. N. Woods remarked, that those in Mary’s house, “[c]ertain... that he [Peter—EL] did not escape death at the hands of the murderous Herod...simply understood that his spirit, separated from his body” and “had come to them” (1991, 106[9]:18).]

An angel of God most certainly worked a great miracle in Judea on this occasion. For the second time, Luke records that an angel set Peter free from prison (cf. Acts 5:19). No Bible-believing Christian would ever deny such wondrous acts that God worked through His angelic creation, nor should any child of God ever deny that He is working providentially through them today (Hebrews 1:14). But, nothing in Acts 12 indicates that God has given each person (or even each Christian) a “guardian angel” to protect him from harm. Furthermore, a lesson can be learned from this text regarding Who should receive the glory for the extraordinary works God’s angels perform. When Peter finally spoke to those gathered at Mary’s house, he “declared to them how **the LORD** had brought him out of the prison” (Acts 12:17, emp. added). Notice that nothing is said here about Peter giving a discourse about a “guardian angel.” And he certainly did not rename Jesus’ church “the church of the Guardian Angels,” or insist on

starting a yearly feast in honor of guardian angels (cf. Roman Catholic’s “Feast of the Guardian Angels”). Luke simply records that Peter wanted his brethren to know what “the LORD” had done. Given that even God’s good angelic creation will not accept worship from mankind, but insist that they are fellow servants (Revelation 19:10; 22:9), it is wise for Christians simply to acknowledge God for His wonderful care in our lives, even if such help is being carried out by His faithful angelic servants.

### Matthew 18:10

More than any other passage of Scripture, guardian-angel advocates point to Matthew 18:10 as their “proof” of guardian angels. On page 88 of his otherwise helpful book, *A Study of Angels* (1978), Edward P. Myers succinctly stated: “Children have guardian angels.” He then referenced only “Matthew 18:10” as the Bible passage that supposedly proves the doctrine. Though Peter Davids questioned the doctrine and popular definition of guardian angels, he noted: “Matthew [18:10—EL] makes the only clear reference to ‘guardian’ angels” (Kaiser, et al., 1996, p. 527). And, according to AmericanCatholic.org, “Jesus’ words in Matthew 18:10 best support the belief [of guardian angels—EL]” (“Feast...,” 2010).

So what exactly did Jesus say in Matthew 18:10? In the midst of warning His disciples not to offend “little ones who believe in Me” (18:1-9), Jesus taught them to “[t]ake heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven **their angels** always see the face of My Father who is in heaven” (18:10, emp. added). Since Jesus spoke of “their angels,” allegedly He was implying that children (or “believers”—18:6) have “guardian angels.”

Matthew 18:10 certainly indicates that there is a special relationship between God’s heavenly host and “these little ones.” And, “[i]n some sense...the angels do belong

to the ‘little ones’ under discussion” (Quertermous, 2002, p. 263). One needs to keep in mind, however, that angels were by no means the main emphasis of Jesus’ lesson. In context,

Jesus was speaking to those who were filled with ambition and desire for prominence which leads to a total disregard for children of the poor and deprived of society. Thus **Christ’s intent was to let those of ambitious bent know that the high lofty angels of glory are always concerned with the welfare of the young children**, as well as the humble hearted poor of society (Turner, 1989, p. 76, emp. added).

Certainly, if **the angels of God** are concerned about the welfare of children and the humble-hearted, as well as those who are young in the faith (cf. 18:6—“little ones who believe”), Jesus’ **apostles** needed to be as well (and less concerned about “who...is greatest in the kingdom of heaven”—18:1). This is the lesson to be learned from Matthew 18:1-14, and not the popular doctrine that each person has an angel on Earth guiding and guarding him from harm.

But, even if one were to ignore the overall context of Matthew 18 in an attempt to force the popular “guardian-angel” slant on verse 10, still the plural possessive pronoun “their” angels scarcely supports the idea that God assigns one angel for each and every child or believer on Earth. As R.C.H. Lenski noted, God “often assigns individual angels for special duties” (1943 p. 692; cf. Hebrews 1:14), but that does not mean that each person has his or her own angel. Furthermore, “It should be observed that these angels are **in heaven**, not upon earth providing human protection” constantly (Chouinard, 1997, p. 326, emp. added). If they are in heaven, they are not continuously guarding “their people” on Earth, as angels are not omnipresent, and must go from place to place (e.g., Daniel 9:20-23).

Finally, although AmericanCatholic.org insists that “Jesus’ words in



Matthew 18:10 best support the belief [of guardian angels—EL],” even they were forced to admit: “The concept of an angel assigned to guide and nurture each human being is a **development of Catholic doctrine and piety** based on Scripture **but not directly drawn from it**” (“Feast...,” 2010). Such an admission speaks volumes about the soundness of the guardian-angel doctrine.

## CONCLUSION

Rather than be infatuated with whether or not each person on Earth (or each Christian) has his or her own guardian angel; rather than conjure up all sorts of reasons why we might like the idea of a guardian angel; rather than celebrate a “Feast of the Guardian Angels” or call ourselves “Guardian Angels Churches,” etc., Christians simply need to accept by faith what the Bible unequivocally does say about these spiritual servants of God (Revelation 19:10): they are interested in our activities and well-being (Luke 15:10; 1 Corinthians 11:10), and are continually working on our behalf “as human needs correspond to His divine will” (Jackson, 2000).

Discovering that the Bible writers were silent regarding whether each human or believer has his or her own special guardian angel should not be a disheartening revelation. For, as Travis Quertermous concluded, the Bible “promises not the protection of a single angel, but **many of them**” (2002, p. 261, emp. added; cf. 2 Kings 6:16-17). Should it not be “much more comforting to know that God sends many angels to look out for me rather than just one when such is in harmony with His will (cf. Heb. 1:14)” (Quertermous, p. 261)?

Finally, although there certainly is a time and place to acknowledge and discuss the wonderful works that the angels of God are performing (keeping in mind that few particulars are given in Scripture), more than anything, God’s people need to focus and

meditate on **God’s** greatness, and not the wonderful ways of God’s angelic creation. They exist in the spiritual realm because **God made them** (Psalm 148:1-5). They minister to us because **God sends them** (Hebrews 1:14). They will have a part in the Second Coming because **God will bring them** (Matthew 13:40-43, 49-51; 25:31-32). As thankful as we should be for what angels have done throughout history for God’s people, we should be driven to our knees in thanksgiving for Who God is and what He has done and continues to do for His people.

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## NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

APOLOGETICS  
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### GIFTS FOR THE SPIRIT

It is hard to believe that another year on God's Earth is drawing to a close. As you enjoy the waning days of 2010, and prepare for the coming New Year, we hope you will consider giving A.P. materials to family and friends. Children, grandchildren, and adults will benefit from the wide variety of books, DVDs, tracts, and other resources that A.P. has developed. These are gifts that will "keep on giving" in the days and years ahead—since **they were designed to nurture the soul**. As we rear our children and grandchildren, our foremost thought ought to be to develop within them spiritual appetites that will cause them to seek their Creator in adulthood. Yes, we want to provide them with physical nourishment to strengthen their bodies. Yes, we want to give them entertaining, but wholesome, books and videos. But above all, we surely want to cultivate their minds with spiritual principles. That is precisely what A.P. materials were created to do! From our children's television programs (*Digger Doug's Underground*) to our Readers and tracts, A.P. resources seek to build character and strengthen the human spirit to obey God. The ploys of Satan are rampant in our declining civilization, and we take seriously the task of saving as many young people as possible. But this goal can only be achieved if those who believe in the work of A.P. help to spread the materials to others. See the center spread of this issue of *R&R* for a few ideas, or check out our new catalog, or go on-line to our Web store to see the full line of our products. Remember, we are in a spiritual war—and we simply must shoulder our responsibility to participate in opposing the forces of Satan!

**Dave Miller**

i wish.



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